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**TURKMENISTAN**

## SUCCESS STORY

# New Methods Keep Children Healthier

**Educated parents are helping to improve the health of children throughout Turkmenistan**



*Health care worker is teaching a mother to use evidence-based treatments of childhood illnesses. Photo: ZdravPlus*

***The USAID ZdravPlus Project with the Ministry of Health have been educating parents in the WHO-recommended Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses approaches to improve the health of children in Turkmenistan.***

Penir's 3 month old is suffering from diarrhea; to help her baby she is using the evidence-based methods she learned during a Keeping Children Healthy campaign - continuing to breastfeed, giving oral rehydration solution, and keeping an eye out for any warning signs that would require professional medical assistance. For her first three children, Penir would have reduced the breastfeeding to her child and given antibiotics, as was previously recommended in such cases.

The USAID ZdravPlus project, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and local authorities, introduced the Keeping Children Healthy campaigns in 2002. The highly popular and successful campaigns and their informational materials have been developed specifically for the Turkmen environment by the USAID project and its local partners. Now largely implemented by local health authorities, the campaigns educate the population on the treatment of diarrhea, nutrition and breastfeeding, and acute respiratory infections,

based on WHO's Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) strategy.

The campaigns also complement USAID-supported IMCI trainings for physicians and nurses. Leaflets, posters, and other mass-media outlets during the Keeping Children Healthy campaign are giving the same advice that the population is receiving from the newly re-trained health care workers. According to Penir, it was her family nurse who had convinced her to use the new method, and asked other family members to listen as well, insisting that the child's health was everyone's responsibility.

With support from USAID's projects, one-hundred nurses have been trained in IMCI methods to date. These nurses are working together with IMCI-trained physicians to provide better care to their young patients and are reaching out to their communities to spread the key IMCI-related health messages. The USAID Healthy Family Project is planning to train up to another 400 nurses in IMCI.